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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3072  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2458  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000996

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND SCA/PPD

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TAGS: [KG](#) [KIRF](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ ANALYST CRITICIZES USG'S MUSLIM OUTREACH

REF: A. BISHKEK 954

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 966

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: A local expert on Islam, Kadyr Malikov, wrote an article sharply critical of U.S. Muslim outreach in Kyrgyzstan. Malikov charged that U.S. outreach -- educational programs, Iftar dinners, exchange visitor trips -- was designed to promote religious extremism and possibly to incite an Islamic revolution. Malikov speculated that the U.S. aimed either to install a pro-American regime or to provoke terrorist attacks that would be used to justify the continued presence of the Manas Coalition Air Base. While Malikov's argument doesn't hold together, it does reflect the conspiracy mindset of many commentators here. Western Ambassadors seconded this view, and said that programs that support Islam are increasingly interpreted as being anti-government. Malikov, who has been an Embassy contact, may have had a personal motivation for this screed: he learned that he had not been selected to participate in an upcoming International Visitors Program. END SUMMARY.

"THE U.S. WILL DO ANYTHING TO KEEP MANAS AIR BASE"

[1](#)2. (SBU) On September 24, independent, pro-Russian, Russian-language newspaper "Delo Nomer" ran an article by Kadyr Malikov, expert at the Institute for Strategic Analysis and Prognosis at Kyrgyz-Russian Slavonic University, on U.S. policy in Central Asia. Malikov has been a good contact of the Embassy and is a respected local expert on Islam. However, the tone of Malikov's article was surprisingly anti-American. Malikov argued that Kyrgyzstan must choose sides with Russia against the United States in the new "Great Game" in Central Asia. He speculated that when President Medvedev visits Kyrgyzstan October 10 for the CIS Summit, he will ask President Bakiyev to close Manas Air Base, which he claimed Russia viewed as a threat to its security. Under such circumstance, Malikov wrote, "the U.S. will do anything to keep the air base." (Note: This became the headline of

the article and a catch line on the front page of the newspaper. End note.)

#### AMERICANS HAVE A "BIG MIDDLE EAST" PLAN

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13. (SBU) Malikov further alleged that the U.S. has a plan to "create pro-American regimes in Muslim countries to localize and contain Islamic protest movements against the U.S." To that end, the article alleged that the U.S. is dividing groups along ethnic lines (Arabs vs. Turks) and along religious lines (Sunni vs. Shiite). The article said the U.S. uses separatism, ethnic and religious radicalism, and nationalism as tools to divide and conquer, and that this is already happening in southern Kyrgyzstan.

#### MUSLIM OUTREACH PERCEIVED AS INCITEMENT TO REVOLUTION

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14. (SBU) Malikov claimed that U.S. Government outreach to Muslims -- specifically educational programs, grants, and trips to the U.S. for religious leaders -- have a malevolent purpose: to incite an Islamic revolution. The article noted that former U.S. Ambassadors Stephen Young and Marie Yovanovitch "regularly attended holiday Namaz, greeted Muslims, and arranged Iftar dinners," in contrast to the Russian Embassy, which "does not do any of these things." The article speculated that since the political opposition has become "toothless," the U.S. may use Islamists to stage a revolution and bring about a pro-American regime. In the alternative, the article stated, the U.S. may be promoting extremism for the purpose of provoking terrorist attacks, which would justify the presence of a U.S. base here. The

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article speculated that a weapons cache seized from a U.S. training team in August was intended for Islamist groups.

#### SUSPICIONS ABOUT

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15. (SBU) Kadyr Malikov, author of the article, is not alone in his suspicion of Islamic groups. In the ambassador's recent meeting with Melis Eshimkanov, the Director of Kyrgyz National Television and Radio, Eshimkanov said that Islamic fanatics pose a greater threat to the Government of Kyrgyzstan than the opposition (Ref B).

16. (C) During the Ambassador's monthly lunch with Western Ambassadors and heads of international organizations on September 24, Muslim outreach was the first topic of discussion. The consensus view was that Bakiyev had so effectively limited the influence of the secular opposition that the Islamic groups were the only remaining groups that could challenge the government. The Ambassadors said that while there were sincere religious believers in the south, some in the north cynically used religious groups and money from Saudi Arabia to fund and foment opposition to the government, effectively echoing the Kyrgyz government's line.

The Ambassadors agreed that the Bakiyev government could be expected to react neuralgically to any program that supported Islam, interpreting it as anti-government. The Turkish Ambassador concluded, "I never do anything that can be remotely construed as pro-Islamic because I know Bakiyev will see it as aimed against him."

#### PERSONAL MOTIVATION FOR CRITICISM?

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17. (SBU) The author of the article is a respected Kyrgyz expert on Islam, but he may have had personal reasons for his tirade. He had recently learned that he had not been selected to participate in an International Visitor Leadership Program on interreligious diversity and dialogue.

COMMENT

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18. (C) Suspicion of U.S. programming in Kyrgyzstan is not new, and conspiracy theories are regular fare in the media. We have tried to use our outreach efforts to address misconceptions held by some in the religious community about American attitudes and Muslim life in America. We have also conducted our outreach programs transparently, to allay any suspicions about our intentions; for example, at the Ambassador's recent Iftar in Osh, both religious and civil leaders were invited (Ref A).  
GFOELLER